U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs
Veterans Health Administration
PBM Academic Detailing Service

Type 2 Diabetes

Important Information for Staying Healthy

Take control of your diabetes

You can lower your risk of complications by keeping blood glucose (sugar) readings in your target range.

Know your numbers!

HbA1c ("A1c"): This test gives you an idea about your blood glucose level over the past 3 months.

What is your A1c target range? A1c goals should be matched to your health conditions, lifestyle, and blood glucose results. A younger Veteran with a new diagnosis of diabetes and no complications may have an A1c target range of 6-7%. An older Veteran, especially with other medical conditions, may have an A1c target range of 7-8% or even higher. Intensive treatment using insulin to a target of < 7% should be avoided in older Veterans with other medical conditions. This can put them at high risk for low blood glucose.

A1c GOAL

Younger Veteran HbA1c ~6-7%

Older Veteran HbA1c ~7-8%

Talk with your healthcare provider to determine which goal is right for you.

A1c target range goals and blood glucose target ranges:

My goal: *(healthcare provider to check)*	A1c target range (%)	Blood glucose (mg/dL)	
		Before meals	Before bedtime
❑	6 to 7	80 to 130	90 to 150
❑	7 to 8	90 to 150	100 to 180
❑	7.5 to 8.5	90 to 160	100 to 200
❑	8 to 9	100 to 180	110 to 200

It is also important to keep your blood pressure in the recommended range. Doing this will lower your risk of heart attacks, strokes, and kidney damage. Talk with your healthcare team about your individual goals.

Take control of your diabetes with lifestyle changes

MEAL PLANNING

Maintain a balanced diet by including:

✓
- non-starchy vegetables
- whole grains
- lean meats
- legumes like beans and lentils

Your body breaks down carbohydrates into sugar. This sugar increases blood glucose readings. Limit your intake of food and drink high in carbohydrates, including:

✗
- regular soda
- fruit juice
- coffee with sugar
- sweet tea
- pasta
- rice
- bread
- cookies
- crackers
- potatoes
- fruit

What's on your plate? Try this!*

- ✓ Eat more fresh or frozen vegetables.
- ✓ Choose protein-rich foods like lean meats, soy products, nuts, eggs, or cheese.
- ✓ Keep carbohydrate portions to 1/2 to 1 cup. Choose fiber-rich forms like whole grain pasta, legumes, sweet potatoes, or brown rice.
- ✓ Eat less of starchy carbohydrates (corn, peas, breads, white rice, pasta, cereal).

*If you have chronic kidney disease, your provider or dietitian may suggest a different meal plan.

EXERCISE/ACTIVITY

Doing both aerobic and strength training is best for lowering your A1c. Try walking, biking, or swimming for at least 30 minutes, 5 days a week. Exercise using light weights or resistance bands at least 2 days a week.

WEIGHT LOSS

A 5-10% decrease in weight can make a big difference in your numbers for diabetes.

TOBACCO

Stop smoking tobacco, chewing tobacco, vaping, or using electronic cigarettes. They increase your risk for heart disease and stroke. If you want to quit, talk to your VA healthcare team.

Know about low blood glucose (hypoglycemia)

What is low blood glucose?

- Blood glucose that drops to 70 or below is considered too low
- If you notice symptoms or feel different than you normally do, check your blood glucose

What causes it?

- Taking too much insulin or other diabetes medicines
- More activity or exercise than usual
- Missing a meal or eating less than usual
- Drinking alcohol

What are the symptoms?

- **Mild:** Shakiness, fast heartbeat, dizziness, sweating, hunger, blurred vision, difficulty concentrating, anxiety, headache, feeling tired
- **Moderate:** Confusion, difficulty moving your body, unusual behavior
- **Severe:** Acting angry or aggressive, unable to swallow, unresponsive, seizures, coma

Follow the 15/15 rule for treating low blood glucose

STEP 1	STEP 2	STEP 3	STEP 4
• Eat **15 grams (g)** of carbohydrates. • Use a quick source of glucose; avoid sources high in fat or protein.	• Check your blood glucose **15 minutes** later.	• If still below 70, repeat Step 1. • Once your glucose is over 70, then go to Step 4.	• Eat a meal or snack (if your next meal is more than 1 hour away) to prevent your glucose from dropping.

What equals 15 grams of carbohydrates?

2 tablespoons raisins

1 tablespoon jelly, honey, corn syrup, or sugar

1/2 cup fruit juice or regular soda

1/2 to 1 tube glucose gel or 3-4 glucose tablets*

*Ask your pharmacist or healthcare team how much glucose tablets or gel will make 15 grams. The amount can vary between products.

Prevent low blood glucose

MEAL PLANNING:

Understand how many grams of carbohydrate you should eat at each meal.

MEDICATIONS:

Take diabetes medicine as prescribed. Too much can cause your glucose to go too low.

EXERCISE:

- Have your glucose tablets or other form of quick sugar with you during all activity.
- Eat a small carbohydrate snack if doing more exercise than normal.

? DID YOU KNOW

Some diabetes medicines should be taken at specific times around meals.
When you take these medicines without eating, your blood glucose can go too low.

Take about 30 minutes before meals:

- Glipizide
- Insulin (regular)

Take *just before* eating a meal:

- Glimepiride (Amaryl®), glyburide
- Rapaglinide (Prandin®), nateglinide (Starlix®)
- Insulin aspart (Novolog®), insulin lispro (Humalog®), insulin glulisine (Apidra®)

TIPS

- Wear an ID bracelet or necklace or carry a wallet card showing you have diabetes.
- Always carry a source of quick glucose (sugar) with you.
- Check your blood glucose before driving. Never drive when your blood glucose is low.
- Call your provider if you have frequent or severe low blood glucose.

Please call _____ with any questions or concerns.

Veterans Crisis Line
1-800-273-8255 PRESS 1

Veterans Crisis Line: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) or Text 838255